

Final Report of the Planner/Conservation Agent Hiring Committee

Committee Members: *Mark Fairbrother* (Conservation Committee Chair and resident), *Erin MacLean* (business owner and resident), *Francia Wisnewski* (Finance Committee Chair, business owner, and resident), *Bill Ketchen* (Building Inspector), *Suzanne LoManto* (Assistant Planner/RiverCulture and resident), *Walter Ramsey* (Assistant Town Administrator and resident, former Town Planner), *Ron Sicard* (Planning Board Chair and resident), and *Jen Audley* (Franklin Regional Council of Governments and resident)

November 25, 2022

To the Selectboard of the Town of Montague:

This committee has met seven times since being appointed in September 2022, and received much-appreciated support from the Town Administrator and staff in the Selectboard's Office. Our work began with learning about the qualifications and types of experience that a qualified applicant might possess and becoming familiar with the Town's job description for this role, which is part of the NAGE union. We also provided input on outreach and advertising plans and the timeline for the search. Applications were received between October 6 and November 4; we reviewed that pool and invited three well-qualified candidates to share work samples and meet us for in-person interviews. Now we are presenting you with two finalists who emerged from that process and unanimously recommending Maureen Pollack for the position.

Both finalists, Angela Wheeler and Maureen Pollack, are qualified professionals with credentials, experience, and talents that would be welcome in the next leader of Montague's Planning Department. We enjoyed meeting with them both and believe that either could be a great addition to the team at Town Hall. Steve Ellis has also spoken with professional references for both finalists and reported to me that both were described as "bright, hard working, well organized, and effective and thoughtful communicators. Each was lauded as a 'delight' to work with. The greatest difference lies in their practical experience in the role of planner, which is where Maureen really stands out."

That is the hiring committee's conclusion as well. Maureen Pollack's work experience is more directly relevant as it includes positions with increasing responsibility in the planning departments of two neighboring communities: Greenfield and Amherst. She also has served as a Conservation Agent. We believe the expertise she's gained from working in communities that are similar to ours but larger and somewhat better-resourced will be applicable and valuable for Montague. Ms. Pollack has strong, positive connections to our community, and we feel confident that her background knowledge and skills will support an efficient transition. She is well-equipped to take the reins on projects that were initiated by Mr. Ramsey and to support other colleagues, the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. Ms. Pollack's professional passions include elements of planning that are important for Montague, including place-making, affordable housing, and historic

preservation, and she has a track record of working effectively with local businesses, artists, and community members with disabilities.

I have included both finalists' resumes and cover letters along with this report, as well as the questions they answered during their interviews. Those interviews were recorded, but unfortunately the recording quality was quite poor, so they will not be a useful resource for you. I can report that the scoring from the interviews supports our recommendation. Using the Town's standard rubric for scoring candidates' responses, Ms. Pollack received a total of 590 points, and Ms. Wheeler had a total of 567.

I hope this report gives you the information you need to move forward with an offer. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for giving us the opportunity to support this hiring process and contribute in such a meaningful way to the future of our town!

Respectfully,
Jen Audley, Chair

Interview questions for candidates for Town Planner/Conservation Agent

(Scored on a 1-10 scale by 8 committee members, using a standardized response key.)

1. Tell us about what motivated you to apply for this job now, at this point in your career? What experiences and qualifications do you bring, and how does this job fit into your long-term professional goals?
2. How would you describe the primary responsibilities of the town planner to someone who'd recently moved to Montague? How would you explain the conservation agent's role?
3. We asked you to provide some samples from a project that showcases your experience and skills. Tell us about the project, why you chose it, and what you hope we will learn about you from the samples you shared.
4. Our next town planner will take the reins on several major initiatives that are already underway, and will be joining a highly collaborative team of colleagues. What strategies will you use to get oriented and keep the momentum going while adding your own perspective? If you have made a transition like this in the past, please share a lesson you learned from the experience.
5. Our town has successfully incorporated public art and cultural programming into multiple building and redevelopment plans and has been recognized for its placemaking work. Tell us about your experience with this element of planning. What's an example of a placemaking project that made a strong impression on you?
6. Planners are agents of change and change in someone's neighborhood can often be met with opposition. The planner will have to enforce regulations, make recommendations and execute policy or board decisions that can sometimes leave people aggrieved. Tell us about a time that that you dealt with an aggrieved constituency or person and how you helped influence a positive outcome for the community.
7. We believe that engaging residents in planning processes is an important part of the planner's role. Please tell us about your experience with coordinating community outreach and input and how that experience relates to this role. What do you consider to be best practices for engaging diverse stakeholders?
8. We value continuous learning and professional development and expect that our next planner will have some areas in which they will be motivated to improve their skills. What is an aspect of this role where you know you have learning to do? How will you approach it?
9. Community projects can be complex and not everything goes as we intend. Tell us about a past project that didn't go as you'd expected, what you learned from the experience, and how that learning has influenced your current approach to project planning and implementation.

MAUREEN C. POLLOCK

November 2, 2022

Wendy Bogusz
Town of Montague

1 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

Re: Town Planner & Conservation Agent Position

Dear Ms. Bogusz,

I am writing to express my interest in the Town Planner & Conservation Agent position currently open with the Town of Montague. I believe that my educational background and professional experience make me an excellent candidate for this position.

Currently, I am working as a Staff Planner with the Town of Amherst. In this role, I provide technical assistance to various boards, including the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Design Review Board, among others. I prepare grant applications and assist with short and long-term planning projects. Recently, I assisted with drafting and presenting zoning amendment proposals that focus on design standards, inclusionary zoning, and updates to various existing residential use classifications. I have served as a project manager for various long-term planning projects including the creation of a town-wide Pedestrian & Bicycle Network Plan, as well as, updating the Town's ADA/504 Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan.

Prior professional experience includes working as Assistant Planner with the City of Greenfield. In addition to providing technical assistance to boards and commissions, I served as project manager for various long-term planning projects, including the MassDOT Complete Streets Program, a wayfinding and community re-branding project, and for the creation of a new downtown pedestrian public plaza. For each of these projects, I successfully secured grant funding, collaborated with various stakeholders, hosted public forums, and provided public outreach and marketing strategies. Additionally, I organized new community events bringing residents, local businesses, and artists together.

I received my Master's Degree in Regional Planning at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst with an emphasis in urban design. My course studies focused on engaging public, private, non-profit, and community sectors; enhancing public space; and contributing to healthy sustainable communities.

This range of experience working directly with professionals and the public on complex projects makes me an excellent candidate for the Town Planner & Conservation Agent position with the Town of Montague. Enclosed is a copy of my resume, which highlights my educational background and professional experience. I look forward to speaking with you about my qualifications for this position.

Sincerely,

Maureen Pollock

MAUREEN C. POLLOCK

EXPERIENCE

2018-Present

Planner, Department of Conservation & Development, Amherst, MA

Provide technical assistance to the Zoning Board of Appeals, Design Review Board and Disability Access Advisory Committee. Prepare grant applications, draft and present zoning amendment proposals, and serve as a project manager for various short and long term planning projects.

2013-2017

Assistant Planner, Department of Planning & Development, Greenfield, MA

Provided technical assistance to the Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, and Local Cultural Council. Prepared grant applications and assisted with implementation measures recommended from the City's Sustainable Master Plan and Open Space & Recreation Plan.

2010-2012

Outreach Intern, Massachusetts Watershed Coalition (MWC), Leominster, MA

Led outreach efforts in support of MWC's Billion Gallons a Year Stormwater Campaign; developed and maintained a statewide inventory of municipal stormwater management related projects and policies; and produced maps and other graphic displays of spatial data for analysis and presentation.

Land Use & Environment Intern, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Springfield, MA

Communicated with municipal stormwater coordinators with assessment of stormwater infrastructure needs; assisted with research and development of best management practices approaches appropriate for each municipality; and wrote narratives summarizing my research and findings, which were incorporated into the PVPC Green Infrastructure Regional Plan.

Teaching Assistant, Sustainable Residential Development Studio, UMass, Amherst, MA

Created weekly lecture presentations and reviewed students' work during their design and site grading process.

2008-2009

Land Use Planning Intern, Planning and Zoning Department, Amherst, MA

Worked with municipal planners to review site plans as they related to municipal regulations and bylaws; researched proposed bylaws and zoning changes; and examined alternatives patterns for future land use development and conservation strategies.

EDUCATION

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA (2008-2015)

Master's Degree in Regional Planning

Framingham State University, Framingham, MA (2001 - 2005)

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science

Natick High School, Natick, MA (1996 - 2001)

Angela Wheeler

October 10, 2022

To: Wendy Bogusz, Executive Assistant
Town of Montague, Massachusetts
1 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

Dear Wendy,

I am writing to express my interest in Montague's Town Planner and Conservation Agent position. Earlier this summer, I was excited to learn about Montague's upcoming comprehensive plan via the community survey and have not stopped thinking (or talking to everyone) about local and regional planning ideas since then. My wife and I moved to the area a few years ago to be closer to her family, and I have been consistently delighted by the unique energy of Montague and its residents.

As a resident of Turners Falls, I am enthusiastic about finding creative ways to support the immense potential that already exists in our communities, infrastructure, and environment. As a professional with over ten years of experience in planning, cultural preservation, and education, I know that I have an unusually diverse and interdisciplinary set of skills to contribute to the constantly-unfolding project of community planning.

I have previously worked for local, state, national, and international organizations both at home and abroad. But what initially drew me into planning practice was the experience of participating in historic and environmental conservation projects in my hometown of Berlin, Massachusetts as a high schooler. To this day, I still find the most energizing aspect of my work to be public engagement—whether that's learning about the evolution of a park from community members, developing an undergraduate curriculum in urban history, or explaining planning ideas in a public talk. Although I certainly enjoyed consulting on international projects over the years, I increasingly recognized the limitations of working as an outsider or temporary contributor toward goals that actually rely on local knowledge and long-term capacity-building to succeed. I look forward to taking on a position that prioritizes cultivating community resources and local partnerships over time.

As you will see in my attached resume, I have experience working with diverse stakeholders, clients, institutions, and learners. I am also familiar with procedures and regulations for a variety of planning, preservation, and conservation projects. I would be proud to use this training for the benefit of our community. As it is, I am constantly energized by all of the planning and development opportunities I see around us and would be absolutely jazzed to contribute to them through daily work. Thank you for your time and consideration—I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Angela Wheeler

Education

- 2017- **PhD, History and Theory of Architecture and Urbanism**, Harvard University
Dissertation: "Old Cities, New People: Soviet Urban Heritage Planning, 1948-1991"
- 2016 **Dual MSc, Urban Planning / Historic Preservation**, Columbia University
Thesis: "Preserving Late Soviet Culture at Tbilisi Palace of Rituals"
Studios: Roosevelt Island Cornell Tech campus development proposal (New York, NY), Haji Bunder industrial waterfront redevelopment (Mumbai, India), Manhattan Privately-Owned Public Space regulation (New York, NY)
- 2013 **Fulbright US Student Research Program**, Tbilisi (Republic of Georgia)
- 2012 **BS, Cultural and Historic Preservation**, Salve Regina University

Professional Experience

- 2022 **Adjunct Lecturer**, University of Massachusetts Amherst Department of Architecture
Designed and taught courses in urban history and design at graduate and undergraduate levels
- 2019-2021 **Teaching Fellow**, Harvard University Graduate School of Design
Led class discussion groups and provided project feedback for graduate courses in architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture
- 2017-2018 **Historic Site Survey Research Grantee**, Graham Foundation
Surveyed over forty historic buildings and consulted with local experts to produce a bilingual exhibition and publication, *Indigenous Outsiders: Endangered Islamic Heritage in the Republic of Georgia*
- 2013-2017 **Mary Kay Judy Architectural & Cultural Heritage Conservation**, Brooklyn NY
Created dossiers of archival material to guide architectural conservation plans; surveyed historic and recreational sites at New York state and municipal parks
- 2015-2016 **US Delegate - Ethnography Research Group**, Stanford-US Russia Forum
Working with Russian delegates, authored a policy report on Arctic fossil fuel exploration and pipeline construction in conflict with Alaskan and Siberian indigenous heritage rights
- 2014 **Council of Europe**, Tbilisi (Republic of Georgia)
Authored a report on sustainable development strategies in ten small to midsize cities for the "Community-Led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns" program; led a mini-course for local professionals on historic preservation economics
- 2013 **DOCOMOMO**, New York NY
Conducted field surveys for Soviet historic sites and managed foreign outreach for an international conference in Seoul
- 2013 **Mason Architects**, Honolulu HI
Analyzed original as-built plans and surveyed existing conditions at public housing sites on three islands for HUD's national Green Physical Needs Assessment; edited management guidelines for historic military installations

- 2012-2013 **International Council of Monuments and Sites**, Tbilisi (Republic of Georgia)
Surveyed effects of the Betlemi Quarter Revitalization Program on historic district economic development, tourism, and resident welfare; led workshops on preservation planning through the Regional Cooperation for Cultural Heritage Development
- 2011-2012 **Museum of Russian Icons**, Clinton MA
Developed educational programming highlighting conservation techniques and coordinated community outreach through local historic district event planning

Publications & Presentations

- 2022 *Architectural Guide: Tbilisi*, DOM Publishers
- 2021 "Design Across the Iron Curtain: Modern Architecture in Soviet Georgia"
Illustrated lecture hosted by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz
- 2019 "What Happened to That Building? Writing an Architectural Guide for a City in Flux"
Lecture hosted by the American Councils of Georgia
- 2018 *Wooden Mosques of Adjara: Islamic Architectural Heritage in the Republic of Georgia*
Bilingual exhibition and catalog, Chubinashvili National Research Center (Tbilisi)
- 2018 "A Departure from the Ordinary: the Design Legacy of Soviet Bus Stops"
Introductory essay for *Soviet Bus Stops in Georgia* by Nanuka Zaalishvili, IDAAF Publishing
- 2017 "Birth and Rebirth: The Mosques of Russia and the Caucasus"
Chapter in *Mosques: Magnificent Designs*, Rizzoli
- 2016 "Red Rites: Wedding and Funeral Ceremonies in the Soviet Union"
Illustrated lecture at the Morbid Anatomy Museum, Brooklyn NY
- 2016 *Beyond the Ruin: Soviet Georgian Architecture in Context*
Architectural photography exhibition at Columbia University's Harriman Institute
- 2016 "Mitigating the Risks of Fracking for Industrial Actors on Northern Indigenous Peoples"
Co-authored paper, *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*
- 2016 "New Look for Old Tbilisi: Preservation Planning in Tbilisi Historic District"
Journal of Identity Studies in the Caucasus